



evas

YOUTH AT THE CENTRE OF IMPACT:

TOWARD AN OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK



canadian
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homelessness



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OUR PARTNERS



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YOUTH AT THE CENTRE OF IMPACT: TOWARD AN OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

BACKGROUND

In general, youth service providers have a strong interest in learning how effective they are in improving the quality of life for youth experiencing homelessness. But it has proven difficult to identify a coherent framework in which to measure outcomes, and young peoples' voices have not traditionally been brought into the evaluation process as the people most impacted by these services.

With the support of an Innovative Solutions to Homelessness Microgrant from the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth sought to fill this gap to help us develop a robust system to gauge our effectiveness in ending youth homelessness. In April 2017, we partnered with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) to help us develop an outcomes framework, not only to benefit ourselves but also to support the evaluative efforts of the Youth Shelter Interagency Network, a group of sister agencies working with homeless youth in Toronto.

This report provides a high-level summary of our outcomes framework project. Together, Eva's and COH aimed to develop metrics that would extend beyond the "micro-level" of our programs and the "macro-level" of the City of Toronto's efforts to something that could be contextualized at the community level.

ABOUT EVA'S

Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth is an award-winning organization that provides shelter, transitional housing, and programming to help homeless and at-risk youth reach their potential to lead productive, self-sufficient, and healthy lives. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, 123 youth aged 16 to 24 find safe shelter and support in our facilities every night. Eva's gives youth the tools to transition out of homelessness permanently.

Eva's is named in honour of Eva Smith, a Toronto community leader who noticed that youth at-risk and those who were homeless were unrecognized and unsupported. Her advocacy led to the opening of our first facility, Eva's Place, and Eva's now runs three facilities in the City of Toronto.

- 📍 **Eva's Phoenix:** townhouse-style transitional housing for 50 youth, providing education support and employment training.
- 📍 **Eva's Place:** 40-bed emergency shelter and home to the Family Reconnect Program.

- ◆ **Eva's Satellite:** 33-bed emergency shelter that also specializes in harm reduction for youth with substance use and mental health needs.

ABOUT CANADIAN OBSERVATORY ON HOMELESSNESS

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is a non-profit, non-partisan research institute that is committed to conducting and mobilizing research so as to contribute to solutions to homelessness. We work together as a group of researchers, service providers, policy and decision makers, people with lived experience of homelessness as well as graduate and undergraduate students from across Canada with a passion for social justice issues and a desire to solve homelessness in our communities.

ABOUT THE YOUTH SHELTER INTERAGENCY NETWORK

The Youth Shelter Interagency Network (YSIN) co-ordinates the wide-ranging, client-focused services of Toronto's youth shelters and advocates to ensure adequate funding is available to effectively serve the diverse needs of Toronto's homeless youth.

YSIN was formed in 1994 to represent the interests of Toronto's shelter operators for homeless youth. A unified voice to raise awareness of the multi-faceted social and health programs run out of Toronto's youth shelters, YSIN also co-ordinates the overall planning and service delivery for Toronto youth shelter operators. Moreover, the Network collaborates to resolve present and long-term issues, and to promote new methodologies designed to improve the service delivery of youth shelter operators.

MEMBERS

- ◆ Covenant House
- ◆ Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth
- ◆ Horizons for Youth
- ◆ Kennedy House Youth Services Inc.
- ◆ Turning Point Youth Shelter
- ◆ YMCA House
- ◆ Youth Without Shelter

METHODS

In collaboration with Eva's, the research and evaluation team at the COH developed a comprehensive research framework that followed a deductive approach. In this approach, we started with a general overview of the literature and then applied the learning from the review to a detailed analysis of the context at Eva's. The process is highlighted in the graphic below.



TOWARD AN OUTCOME MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

The results from the literature review and consultations demonstrated the complexity involved in accurately capturing outcomes for youth that are meaningful, flexible, and youth-driven. Consensus was developed for several of the outcomes across the various data collection strategies used in this study. But, even the most comprehensive outcomes framework will not capture the unique identities and trajectories of all young people. Thus, our outcome measurement framework can be considered a ‘living document’, or one that will require further refinement and expansion as the programming needs of youth grow and develop.

HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK

We present a holistic outcomes framework, one that is heavily influenced by the Circle of Courage (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2007), which is a model of positive youth development focused on emotional health and wellbeing.¹ The Circle of Courage involves four main domains:²



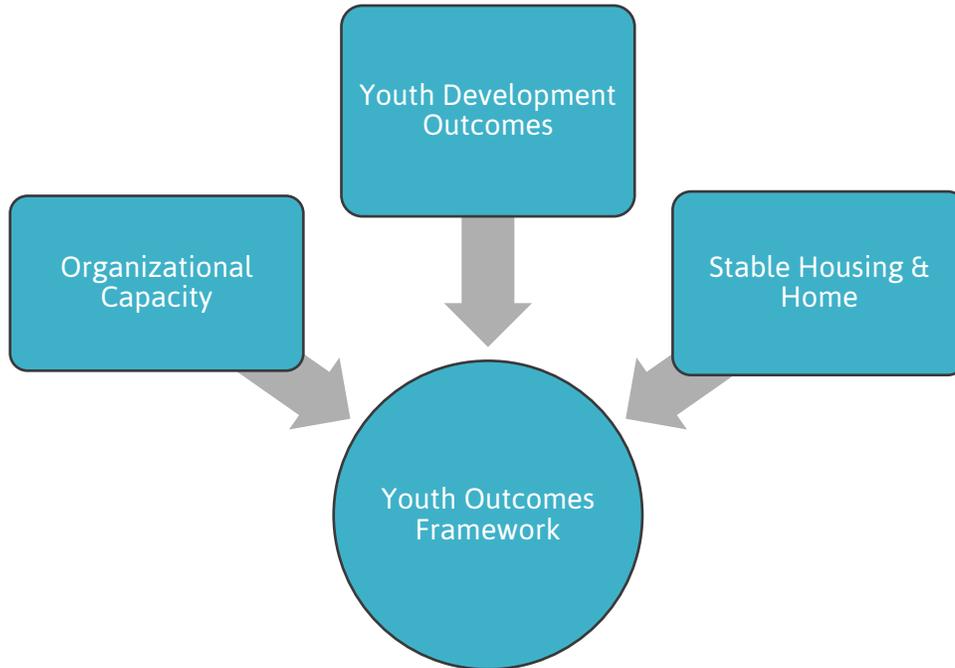
We also take teachings from the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' Definition of Indigenous Homelessness, developed by Jesse A. Thistle (2017).³ In particular, we take the understanding of “home” as more than just a physical structure, but one that includes a connectedness to social supports and the land. We incorporate this model as participants in the visioning session noted that many youth are not rooted in community, making it difficult to establish a home.

¹ Reclaiming Youth Network. “The Circle of Courage Philosophy.” 2007. www.reclaiming.com/about/index.php?page=philosophy.

² <https://www.starr.org/training/youth/aboutcircleofcourage>

³ Thistle, J. (2017.) *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

EVA'S OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK



COMPONENTS

The outcome measurement framework begins with an acknowledgment of the organizational capacity required to facilitate the achievement of these outcomes.

It then leads to a set of youth development outcomes focused on Belonging and Mastery/Independence, with five main outcomes and six secondary outcomes identified. The Mastery and Independence categories were combined given the overlap of the constructs. We also moved the Generosity category to fit within the Belonging category due to overlap of the constructs.

The main outcomes are seen as foundational for the attainment of the secondary outcomes. For example, in order for youth to feel safe within their communities, they must be provided the opportunity to develop a connection with their communities and to the land. Further, employment skills should be rooted in a manner that recognizes the importance of empowerment and self-esteem.

The measurement framework closes with a definition of stable housing that is youth-driven.

PROCESS

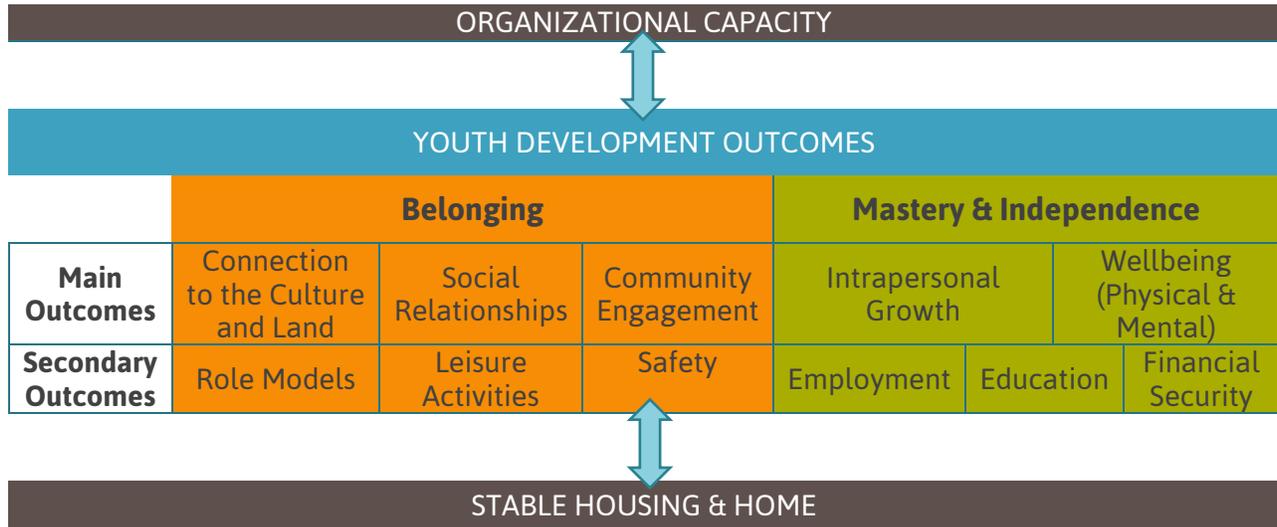
Although not necessarily a linear process, it is thought that organizational capacity will lead to the attainment of a sense of belonging and mastery/independence, which will lead to stable housing.

The use of double-headed arrows indicates that the framework may need to be modified depending as organization grows, youth development needs change, and housing options for youth grow.

PRESENTATION

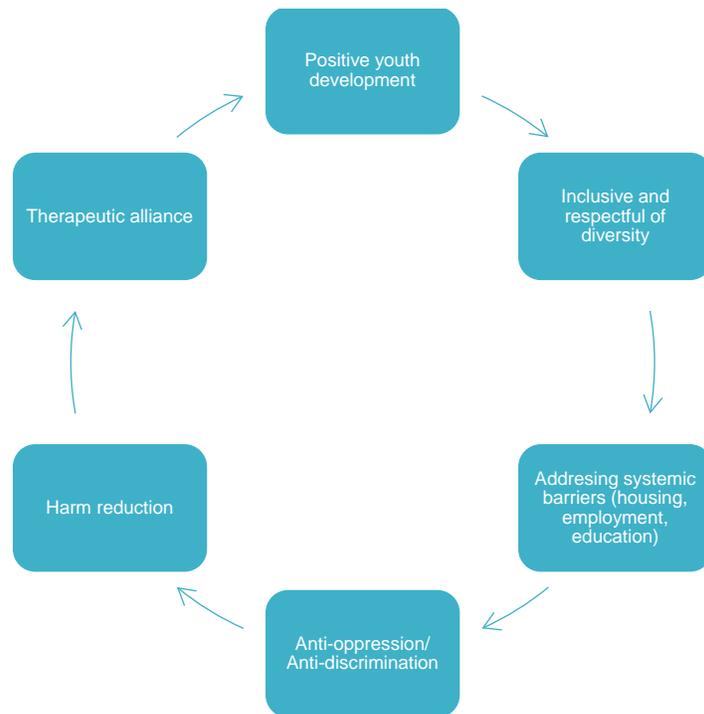
A general overview of the outcomes framework is presented below, followed by a description of the organizational capacity elements required. The main and secondary outcomes are then presented in detail, followed by a definition of stable housing and home.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK



ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

These outcomes are framed in a manner that requires a strong organizational capacity to foster their development. Organizational capacity was often a missing component within the literature, but was emphasized throughout the discussion with Eva’s managers and program staff. This organizational capacity should include the following principles:



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The set of youth development outcomes was created based upon the literature review, the focus groups with youth and Eva’s Phoenix staff, and consultations with Eva’s managers and directors from other youth-serving agencies in Toronto. The outcomes are grouped upon Belonging and Mastery/Independence. Within each grouping, a set of main outcomes and a set of secondary outcomes are presented with indicators to measure each outcome. The main outcomes were prioritized based upon consultations with Eva’s staff to ensure that they were contextually relevant. It is thought that if the main outcomes are addressed, then the secondary outcomes will occur.

BELONGING

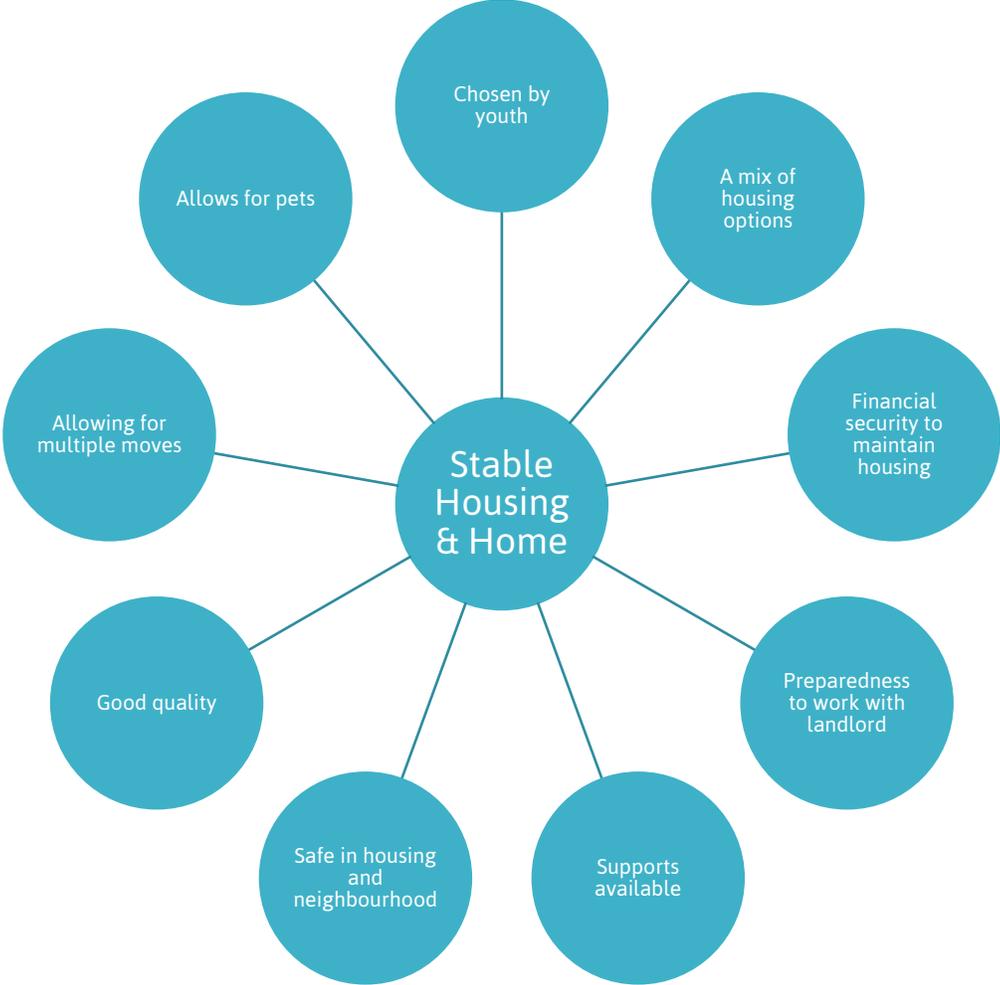
MAIN OUTCOMES		
<p>CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND CULTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ (Re) connecting to the land ➤ (Re) connecting to one’s culture 	<p>SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reconnecting with family (when appropriate) ➤ Building upon social networks developed within the system ➤ Developing friendships outside of the system 	<p>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sense of community ➤ Sense of belonging ➤ Awareness of resources available ➤ Mentorship opportunities ➤ Generosity
SECONDARY OUTCOMES		
<p>ROLE MODELS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community partners stepping in ➤ Supportive adults ➤ Peer supports 	<p>LEISURE ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engaging in meaningful activities ➤ Physically active ➤ Artistically fulfilled 	<p>SAFETY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Within one’s home ➤ Within one’s neighbourhood ➤ Both include lessening exposure to violence

MASTERY & INDEPENDENCE

MAIN OUTCOMES		
<p>INTRAPERSONAL GROWTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Self-esteem 📌 Empowerment 📌 Addressing labels (“homeless”) 📌 Instilling hope/dreaming 📌 Generosity 	<p>WELLBEING (PHYSICAL AND MENTAL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Addressing mental health challenges 📌 Developing coping skills 📌 Accessing health services 📌 Monitoring health 	
SECONDARY OUTCOMES		
<p>EMPLOYMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Meaningful employment to youth 📌 Sustainable employment 📌 Financially viable employment 📌 Skill development 	<p>EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Achieving educational goals 📌 Achieving goals outside of the educational system (e.g., driver’s license, soft skill development) 📌 Exploring alternative forms of education outside of traditional systems 📌 Skill development 	<p>FINANCIAL SECURITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Budgeting 📌 Developing savings 📌 Food security

STABLE HOUSING & HOME

To conclude, the progress towards youth development outcomes will lead youth on a path to home. Stable housing can have many definitions, however we provide a list of key components that are youth-driven and youth-directed.



EVA'S INITIATIVES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

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